

Annual Container Gardening

What are Annuals?

Introduction: Annual means yearly, and annuals plants complete their entire life cycle within one year or less. Annuals usually die with the first hard frost, with the exception a few "hardy annuals", such as alyssum, snapdragons, dianthus, etc. We treat some Perennials as Annuals, i.e., Pansies and Dianthus.

I. Locations and Placement of Containers

- A. Terraces, decks, balconies, porches and even roof tops.
- B. Attainable Effects:
 - 1. Create a portable garden with groupings of annuals planters.
 - 2. Expand the garden area by placement around edges.
 - 3. Create dividers between areas or leading the way up steps.
 - 4. Fill in unsightly spots in the flower garden throughout the season.
 - 5. Mobility of containers gives the ability to create beauty anywhere and camouflage any eyesore.

II. Choosing the Perfect Container

- A. Many traditional styles:
 - 1. Clay pots, strawberry jars, hanging baskets, half barrels, wooden crates, window boxes.
- B. Unconventional planters:
 - 1. Bird cages, tree stumps, rubber tires, even bath tubs and bed frames.
 - 2. If it can hold soil and be watered, it's a container.
- C. Container pros and cons:
 - 1. Terra Cotta:
 - a. porous and will dry out quickly.
 - 2. Metal:
 - a. conducts heat.
 - b. rust can create soil poison to plants.
 - c. use a plastic liner to keep roots cool.
 - 3. Pressed Fiber and Wire Baskets:
 - a. dry out quickly.
 - b. soil-moist granules can be added to the soil to aid in moisture retention.
 - 4. Wooden:
 - a. untreated will rot.
 - b. treated planters will last much longer, but may need re-finishing to keep them looking fresh.
 - 5. Plastic:
 - a. probably offers the largest selection of styles and colors.
 - b. affordable and lightweight.
 - 6. Drainage vs. No Holes.
- D. If re-using containers, be sure to clean them with household bleach diluted in 10 parts water. One pint/gallon; use gloves and safety glasses for your protection when using bleach and bleach solutions

III. Selecting the Plants

- A. If you have sun, your choices are many:
 - 1. Geraniums, petunias, alyssum, snapdragons, vinca, ageratum, marigolds, zinnias, celosia...and the list goes on.
- B. For shade, the choices are less, but many different combinations can create beautiful planters:
 - 1. Coleus, impatiens, begonias (wax), tuberose, browalia, caladiums, ivy geraniums, fuchsia, etc.
- C. Water preference:
 - 1. Moist.
 - 2. Tolerates drier conditions.
- D. If re-using containers, be sure to clean them with household bleach diluted in 10 parts water. One pint/gallon; use gloves and safety glasses for your protection when using bleach and bleach solutions

Annual Container Gardening

III. Selecting the Plants

- A. If you have sun, your choices are many:
 - 1. Geraniums, petunias, alyssum, snapdragons, vinca, ageratum, marigolds, zinnias, celosia....and the list goes on.
- B. For shade, the choices are less, but many different combinations can create beautiful planters:
 - 1. Coleus, impatiens, begonias (wax), tuberoses, browalia, caladiums, ivy geraniums, fuchsia, etc.
- C. Water preference:
 - 1. Moist.
 - 2. Tolerates drier conditions.
- D. Color:
 - 1. Personal preference - colors give different feelings to different people.
 - 2. What mood do you want to create?
 - a. bold - brassy colors.
 - b. soft - cool, pastel shades.
- E. Consider fragrance:
 - 1. Sweet alyssum, some varieties of nicotiana, heliotrope, scented geraniums and some herbs, such as lemon thyme.

IV. Digging In

- A. Good soil preparation:
 - 1. Easiest method is to buy a good quality potting soil.
 - a. most are soil-less mixes.
 - 2. Mix your own - equal parts of compost, perlite and good loamy, sterilized soil.
- 3. Garden Soil - bad idea.
 - a. not sterile.
 - b. will have weed seeds, insects, and possible fungus.
- B. Consider drainage:
 - 1. Good drainage is essential to successful container gardening.
 - a. use containers with drainage holes for best results.
 - 2. Use stone, broken clay post, or styrofoam peanuts as drainage aids in containers that have no drainage holes.
 - a. be careful not to overwater.
- C. Potting your plant selections.
 - 1. Fill container with soil to allow the proper level to arrange plants, then fill in to allow soil level to be 1" to 2-1/2" below pot rim.
 - 2. Space plants closer than you would in the garden.
 - 3. Choose a taller plant for the center in a combination planting, such as a dracaena spike, large geranium, or perhaps a large coleus or caladium for a shade planter.
 - 4. Use different leaf styles and textures.
 - 5. Cascade effect at outside edges - alyssum, vinca vine, lobelia, asparagus fern, verbena, lantana (trailing), trailing dusty miller.
 - 6. Use leaf color as accents, using plants like dusty miller, coleus and amaranthus.
 - 7. Water in after planting to settle the soil.
 - a. use a spray, not a hard pour.
- D. If potting a strawberry jar, plant in layers and water each layer as you go.
 - 1. Portulaca, begonias, impatiens, lobelia, and alyssum are good for this purpose.

V. Maintenance Throughout the Season

- A. Always check your container garden to be sure it needs watering.
 - 1. Overwatering is the #1 killer of annual planters.
- B. Fertilize on a regular basis.
 - 1. Nutrients leach out with each watering.
 - 2. Water soluble fertilizers are available.
 - 3. Slow release, such as osmocote, great for containers.
 - a. can feed for months.
 - 4. Follow directions exactly on fertilizing your plants. Never use more than the recommended dosage.
 - a. plants burn if too strong.
 - b. overfeeding can also cause excessive foliage growth and reduce flower production.
 - 5. Deadheading some plants, such as petunias, geraniums, snapdragons, etc., will promote more blooms and keep plants looking fresh.

Annual Container Gardening

VI. Enjoy your Container Gardens, created especially for and by You!!

PRODUCT SAMPLES:

Clay Pot	Miracle-Gro
Strawberry Jar	Tools
Hanging Basket	Sprinkling Can
1/2 Barrel	Osmocote / Time-Release Fertilizer
Fiber Pot	Soil Moist
Plastic Pot	Gloves
Window Box	Soil (Baccto-Lite)
Iron Pot	
Wood Crate	

PLANT LISTS:

SUN

Ageratum
Allysum
Dracaena "Spike"
Dusty Miller
Geranium
Ivy Geranium
Marigold
Nicotiana
Petunia
Salvias
Snapdragons
Verbena
Vinca

SHADE

Begonia
Caladium
Coleus
Fuchsia
Impatiens
Lobelia

NEW SPECIALTY PLANTS

Amaranthus	Lotus
Bacopa	Million Bells
Bidens	Scaevola
Caladiums	Sweet Potato Vine
Helichrysum - Foliage (Licorice Plant)	Wave Petunias
Helichrysum - Yellow	
Heliotrope	
Lantana	